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Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 SSC-01 AID-20 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-10

NSAE-00 PA-03 RSC-01 USIA-15 PRS-01 PM-07 NSC-10

SS-15 RSR-01 (ADP) W
---------- 081811
P R 140945Z AUG 73
FM AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4963
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
AMEMBASSY JAKARTA
AMEMBASSY MANILA
AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE
CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L KUALA LUMPUR 3580

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, PGOV
SUBJECT: NEW CABINET - POLITICAL ASSESSMENT

REF: A. KUALA LUMPUR 3552
B. KUALA LUMPUR 3549 (NOTAL)
C. KUALA LUMPUR 3484 (NOTAL)

1. SUMMARY: OTHER THAN MAJOR APPOINTMENTSOF HUSSEIN ONN AS DEP PM AND TRADE/INDUSTRY MIN AND GHAZALI SHAFIE AS HOME AFFAIRS MIN, WIDE-RANGING CABINET RESHUFFLE INVOLVES FAMILIAR FACES IN CABINET/SUB-CABINET KNOWN PRIMARILY FOR THEIR LOYALTY AND RELIABILITY. APPOINTMENTS TRACK WITH PM RAZAK'S WELL-KNOWN STRATEGY OF CONCILIATING AMONG POLITICAL PARTY AND COMMUNAL FACTIONS, ALMOST CERTAINLY WITH EYE TO FUTURE ELECTIONS. NEW LINE-UP DOES NOT INDICATE MAJOR POLICY CHANGES IN OFFING. END SUMMARY.

2. ACCORDING SEVERAL POLITICAL SOURCES, HUSSEIN ONN'S
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APPOINTMENT AS TRADE/INDUSTRY MIN, IN ADDITION DEP PMSHIP

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WHICH DUE HIM BY VIRTUE HIS RECENT SELECTION AS UMNO DEP
PRESIDENT (REF C), IS TO GIVE HIM MORE POPULAR EXPOSURE
COMPARED TO RELATIVELY LOWER PROFILE HOME AFFAIRS POST WHICH
HELD BY LATE DPM ISMAIL. IN GIVING HOME AFFAIRS PORTFOLIO
TO GHAZALI SHAFIE (IN ADDITION TO INFORMATION PORTFOLIO)
PM RAZAK IS PUTTING INTELLECTUALLY HIGH CALIBER AND LOYAL
AIDE IN THIS SENSITIVE POST; NEVERTHELESS, HOME AFFAIRS
ASSIGNMENT MAY ONLY BE INTERIM AND THERE SOME DOUBTS THAT
GHAZ MAY BE TEMPTED USE THIS POST TO FURBISH HIS POLITICAL
IMAGE AMONG MALAYS, THUS PREJUDICING HIS HANDLING OF
SENSITIVE COMMUNAL AND INTERNAL SECURITY ISSUES.

3. HAMZAH AS DEFENSE MIN (HE ALSO PM'S BROTHER-IN-LAW,
AS IS HUSSEIN ONN) AND MOHAMED YA'ACOB AS EDUCATION MIN
BRING RELATIVELY LITTLE TALENT TO THEIR JOBS. THEY
PROBABLY TAPPED BECAUSE OF PERSONAL LOYALTY TO RAZAK AND PROVEN
RELIABILITY. ELEVATION OF RITHAUDDEEN TO SPECIAL FUNCTIONS
MIN AND PM'S STATEMENT THAT HE WILL BE ASSIGNED SUPERVISION OF
GENERAL PLANNING UNIT IN PM'S DEP AND SOME FOREIGN AFFAIRS
MATTERS SUBSTANTIALLY EXPAND HIS SCOPE AND INFLUENCE; IT
LIKELY WE WILL BE SEEING MUCH MORE OF HIM ON INTL SCENE.

4. LONG-TIME RAZAK POLITICAL AIDE MICHAEL CHEN WILL BE
RESPONSIBLE FOR NUCLEAR ENERGY, ENVIRONMENT AND OTHER TASKS
AS SPECIAL FUNCTIONS MIN. THIS APPOINTMENT CLEARLY BALANCES
MCA "OLD GUARD" INCLUDING TAN SIEW SIN, WHO CONTINUES AS
FINANCE MIN, LEE SAN CHOON (REVAMPED PORTFOLIO OF TECHNOLOGY,
RESEARCH AND NEW VILLAGES), AND WONG SENG CHOW, NEW DEP COMM-
UNICATIONS MIN. IN RATHER OBVIOUS ATTEMPT SOOTHE SIEW SIN'S
FEELINGS (SEE PARA 3, REF B), RAZAK APPOINTED HIM CHAIRMAN OF
NATIONAL FINANCE COMMITTEE, ONE OF MANY RESPONSIBILITIES OF
LATE DEP PM.

5. REMAINDER OF APPOINTMENTS INVOLVE RESHUFFLING FAMILIAR
FACES, EXCEPT FOR PMIP "ELDER STATESMAN" HAJI YUSOF
ABDULLAH (AKA YUSOF RAWA) WHO DESIGNATED DEP PRIMARY IN-
DUSTRIES MIN. ELEVATION OF SEVERAL UMNO POLITICIANS FROM
KELANTAN AND JOHORE ASO INDICATES PM HAD SECTIONAL INTERESTS
IN MIND. LASTLY, FAILURE OF DEPT TRADE/INDUSTRY MIN MUSA
HITAM TO ACHIEVE PROMOTION IN TIS ROUND OF CABINET CHANGES
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MAY APPEAR TO BE PERSONAL SETBACK; ON OTHER HAND, WE HAVE NO
REASON BELIEVE MUSA HAS LOST CONFIDENCE OF PM RAZAK AND HE
MAY STAND TO RECOUP IF HUSSEIN ONN'S APPOINTMENT TO TRADE/
INDUSTRY IS ONLY TEMPORARY, E.G., UNTIL NEXT ELECTIONS.

6. IN SUM, THERE NO INDICATION OF MAJOR POLICY DEPARTURES
IN THIS REALIGNMENT AND PREMIUM HAS OBVIOUSLY BEEN PLACED
ON LOYALTY AND RELIABILITY. MOREOVER, PM IS PROBABLY LOOK-

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ING TO GREATER PARTY AND GOVT SOLIDARITY IN FACING ELECTIONS TENTATIVELY SLATED FOR EARLY 1974. HE ALSO SEEMS TO HAVE SUCCEEDED IN SHEDDING SOME TASKS ACCUMULATED BY HIM AND DPM ISMAIL OVER THE YEARS. HOWEVER RAZAK'S STYLE IS TO KEEP TIGHT REIN ON ALL HIS SUBORDINATES. WE DO NOT EXPECT ANY CHANGE IN GOVT PERFORMANCE BUT LOSS OF ISMAIL, IN HIS HIGHLY EFFECTIVE ROLE OF EXPEDITER AND WHIP-CRACKER, MAY MAKE FOR A LESS SMOOTH RUNNING MACHINE THAN PREVIOUSLY.
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